

Speak up & be heard

CONSUMER REGISTER lists summaries of major consumer proposals before Federal agencies. If you wish to submit written comments, include your name & address, state the name & *Federal Register* citation of the proposal on which you are commenting and explain your views briefly & clearly.

Florida grapefruit

Effective May 21, Agriculture Dept. temporarily lowered the minimum grade & size requirements for grapefruit shipped from Florida. The regulation permits the shipment of the remaining 1972-1973 Florida grapefruit crop, some of which is smaller & of poorer quality than Agriculture has specified in its previous regulations.

Lowering the requirements provides more grapefruit for consumers during the time when the seasonal supply is less than usual.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 23, page 13547.

Saccharin

On May 25 Food & Drug Administration (FDA) extended interim authority to manufacturers for the limited use of the artificial sweetener saccharin in dietetic fruit juice drinks, other beverages & processed foods.

FDA had originally placed restrictions on the use of saccharin & removed it from the list of substances generally recognized as safe (GRAS list) on Feb. 1, 1972. This order permitted the use of saccharin on a limited basis until June 30 of this year.

In the meantime, FDA signed a contract with the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council (NAS-NRC) to review the results of experiments on animals to determine whether saccharin causes cancer. NAS-NRC has been reviewing the results, but because of the need for long-term studies, no specific completion date has been set.

Therefore, FDA extended the termination date beyond June 30. FDA considers its action "entirely adequate to protect the public health." So far, tests show only that when animals received the human equivalent of 875 bottles of saccharin-sweetened soft drink per day did they suffer adverse effects.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 25, page 13733; Feb. 1, 1972, page 2437. CONSUMER REGISTER: Feb. 15, 1972.

Lightweight cars

As of Jan. 1, 1974, all cars must meet the motor vehicle safety standards that now apply to motorized vehicles weighing more than 1,000 pounds.

Most, if not all, cars weigh more than 1,000 pounds unless they have only 3 wheels. To be sure that 3-wheeled cars are included in the safety standard, Transportation Dept. has proposed to exclude 3-wheeled vehicles from its definition of motorcycles. (See "Motorcycles & 3-Wheeled Vehicles" next column.)

Details—*Federal Register*: May 16, page 12808.

Motorcycles & 3-wheeled vehicles

July 16 is deadline for comments on Transportation Dept.'s proposal to exclude most 3-wheeled vehicles from its definition of motorcycles.

At present, a motorcycle is defined as any "motor vehicle with motive power having a seat or saddle for the use of the rider & designed to travel on not more than three wheels in contact with the ground."

Transportation considers this redefinition necessary because safety requirements for motorcycles are much less stringent than for passenger cars, which sometimes do have 3 wheels.

Three-wheeled vehicles without full passenger enclosures—such as 3-wheeled police & mail scooters—continue to be covered by the definition of motorcycles for purposes of safety standards.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 16, page 12818. Send comments to Docket Section, National Highway Safety Administration, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590.

Plastic bottles

July 16 is deadline for comments on Food & Drug Administration's proposal to ban the use of plastic containers made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) for bottling alcoholic beverages.

In an experiment by 21 liquor manufacturers, it was demonstrated that a chemical from the PVC bottles "migrated" into liquor stored in such bottles for up to one year. Reports indicated that such migration also occurred in wine bottled in PVC containers.

FDA stresses that there is no indication of danger to human beings from the amounts of this chemical found in the alcoholic beverages during this experiment. FDA also points out that no similar migration has ever been found from PVC packages used for other food or beverage products. Since alcoholic beverages are strong solvents, they are more likely than other beverages or foods to cause migration from the packaging material.

However, FDA requires proof of safety before allowing incidental additives to occur in food or beverages. FDA says no such safety data has been developed for PVC for packaging alcoholic beverages.

The experimental use of the lightweight PVC bottles was authorized by the Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms Bureau of the Treasury Dept. with FDA approval.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 17, page 12931. Send comments to Hearing Clerk, Health, Education & Welfare Dept., 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852.

Odometers

Aug. 1 is deadline for comments to National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration concerning the possibility of producing better tamper-proof odometers.

Specifically, the agency seeks information & views on these questions: (1) To what extent can the reliability of odometers be improved? (2) What is the technical feasibility of producing tamper-proof odometers?

The request stems from certain requirements of the Motor Vehicle Information & Cost Savings Act, which became effective Jan. 18. In addition to making it a Federal offense to tamper with odometers, the act also requires the Secretary of Transportation to prepare a report recommending additional regulations concerning odometers. This report must include a study of reliable & tamper-proof designs for odometers.

From a consumer viewpoint, tamper-proof odometers would offer special protection to car buyers, especially where sales of used cars are concerned. Since the odometer registers the mileage covered by a car, it is useful for the prospective buyer of a used car to know the car's true mileage. In the past, dealers & private sellers have been known to turn back odometers to make it appear that cars have lower mileage than is actually the case. Although this practice is now illegal, a tamper-proof odometer would offer consumers an additional guarantee concerning the mileage registered.

Details—*Federal Register*: May 1, page 10750; Jan. 31, page 2978; Dec. 2, 1972, page 25727. *CONSUMER REGISTER*: Jan. 1 & Feb. 15. Send comments to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590; refer to Docket 73-11.

Lifesavers

Recreational boatmen have until Oct. 1 to comply with Coast Guard's new regulations for lifesaving equipment that must be carried aboard recreational boats (including rowboats & canoes) for each person. Coast Guard's Office of Boating Safety has classified the personal flotation devices (PFDs) into 5 types as described below. To be sure you are getting the right kind, look on the label for Coast Guard's approval number & the words: "U.S. Coast Guard Approved."

Direct questions regarding these regulations to

- Your nearest Coast Guard district office,

PFD number	Brief description	Boat on which the device is acceptable to the Coast Guard
Type I	Life preserver with more than 20 lbs. buoyancy & designed to turn an unconscious person face-up.	All recreational boats
Type II	Buoyant vest with at least 15.5 lbs. of buoyancy & designed to turn an unconscious person from a face-down to face-up floating position.	All recreational boats
Type III	Buoyant vest or jacket with at least 15.5 lbs. of buoyancy—not designed to turn an unconscious person face-up.	All recreational boats
Type IV	A throwable device such as the ring buoy or the buoyant cushion.	Acceptable as primary life-saving equipment on recreational boats less than 16 feet in length

NOTE: Along with the above is the requirement calling for all boats 16 feet & longer to carry at least one Type IV (throwable) device in addition to required devices for that class of boats.

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- Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla,
- U. S. Power Squadron,
- State boating administration, or
- Nearby boat equipment dealer who sells Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices.

Details—*Federal Register*: March 28, page 8116; Oct. 6, 1972, page 21262. *CONSUMER NEWS*: April 15, 1972. *CONSUMER REGISTER*: Nov. 15, 1972.

Frankfurters & cooked sausage

Agriculture Dept. has revised its standards for content & labeling of different types of frankfurters & cooked sausage, such as vienna sausage, bologna & knockwurst. By Sept. 7, processors will have to use new labels to describe 3 different kinds of frankfurter (& similar) products. Examples of revised standards are as follows:

- Hot dogs made from skeletal meat (beef, pork, veal), which could also contain a maximum of 15% poultry meat plus processing ingredients. The total product must not contain more than 30% fat & 10% added water. No frankfurter may be labeled "all meat," but if it is made from only one species of meat, that information must be indicated on the label (for example, "beef frank"). Otherwise it would simply be labeled "frankfurter" or "hot dog."

- Same as above with addition of meat byproducts prominently labeled (for example, "hot dog with byproducts"). Moreover, these byproducts must be individually identified in the label's ingredient statement. Some of the byproducts that Agriculture permits in hot dogs are hearts, tongues, tripe, etc.;

- Similar to first 2 products described above but with addition of 3½% of approved binders—soy flour, dried skim milk, vegetable starch. These extra ingredients must be listed on the label (for example, "frankfurters with byproducts, soy flour added").

The new standards also permit manufacturers to use names for frankfurters that consumers have used for years—such as hot dogs.

Details—*Federal Register*: June 5, page 14741; March 14, page 6898; Dec. 23, 1972, page 28430. *CONSUMER REGISTER*: April 1 & Jan. 15.

